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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the conceptual framework for a rape empathy training program for criminal justice workers. The framework will serve as the guidelines for a planned program manual. Together, this paper and the future manual will serve to encourage empathy in workers who are willing to foster empathy but who are inhibited from feeling empathy by a lack of emotional and intellectual awareness of rape trauma. Eight premises are listed which serve as the basis for the paper and the proposed program. A presentation is given of the three-phase program, which is based on: (1) the process of systematic sensitization, a self-awareness process which helps develop the practice of emotional involvement; and (2) the concept of the disruptive entry spectrum, a way of segmentizing rape trauma in order to help a person to understand and experience the various aspects of the trauma. The disruptive entry spectrum is described as an original concept which, it is hoped, will help individuals to relate to the trauma experience in partial steps, drawing nearer to the fullness of understanding as the training program advances. (Author/NB)

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PAPER

A RAPE EMPATHY TRAINING PROGRAM FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE WORKERS: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the conceptual framework for a rape empathy training program for criminal justice workers which utilizes the process of systematic sensitization (original to this study), a self-awareness process which helps to practice emotional involvement and the concept of the disruptive entry spectrum (original to this study), a way of segmentizing rape trauma in order to help a person to understand and experience the various aspects of the trauma. This disruptive entry spectrum hopefully will help a person to relate to the trauma experience in partial steps, drawing nearer to the fullness of understanding as the training program advances.

A RAPE EMPATHY TRAINING PROGRAM FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE WORKERS: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This paper presents a conceptual framework for a rape empathy training program. This conceptual framework will serve as the guidelines for a detailed manual, specifically outlining this program.

It has been noted frequently by numerous authors, speakers, women's rights advocates, feminists groups, and criminal justice professionals that victims of the crime of rape have been often handled with insensitivity and even crassness. The reasons for these insensitivities are numerous: systems related, organizationally-based, blatant chronic machoism, but at times simply an inability to create empathetic understanding. I would like to think that the word "inability" is more frequently true than the word "unwillingness," although the word "unwillingness" may be true in the case of emotionally-spent workers.

This paper and the future planned program manual will serve to help to encourage empathy in those workers who have a willingness but have an inability to foster empathy because of a lack of emotional and intellectual awareness of rape trauma.

This author in previous writings has defined perfect communications as "complete congruency of perception," the

sender with the receiver. I am not that absurdly naive to think that the criminal justice worker will be able to accomplish a complete congruency of perception with a rape victim, unless that worker was herself or himself a rape victim at a previous time, yet I do think that all human beings have experienced, to some degree, aspects of this trauma, and my training program will try to help increase an awareness among the participants that we have all visited some of the aspects of this trauma, of course, less intensely.

Victims of rape may find my writings and concepts trivial and intolerable. They may argue that humans should be able to automatically conjure empathy. May I respectfully remind them that empathy is achieved when identification is accomplished and identification necessitates self-awareness.

Theoretical Rationale

This paper and its proposed program is based on the following premises:

1. Empathy (the ability of a person to project oneself into the mindset of another) necessitates identification (the perceived psychological closeness of one person with another) at least to some degree. As identification increases, the possibility for empathy also increases.

2. Identification is usually based on a perceived similarity of personal characteristics or experiences.
3. A lack of awareness of a similarity of characteristics or experiences may preclude identification and therefore make empathy not possible.
4. An effort at increased awareness of similarities may help to increase identification and therefore help to foster an increase in empathy.
5. This author recognizes that identification with a female rape victim's trauma by a male criminal justice worker (for example) may be difficult due to differing gender educations.
6. This author further recognizes that rape trauma in toto may seem as not understandable to someone with differing gender education.
7. This paper proposes that rape trauma may be segmented into various emotional components (the learning device known in this paper as the Disruptive Entry Spectrum).
8. Participants through a system of self-awareness exercises may help to foster an identification with each or some of the components (the process in this paper entitled Systematic Sensitization).

Program Framework

The following ideas for this empathy training regimen would be utilized at various time intervals within the

framework of an educational program on rape. As an example, during a two day workshop (16 hours) on rape, an empathy training experience or exercise (to be outlined in this paper) would be utilized at the end of each 1.5 hours of educational materials/presentations. (These empathy training ideas focused during one program period of time may be found to be too intense and therefore counterproductive.)

Phase I

1. Define the concept of territoriality (physical and psychological space) to participants
   A. Give examples of physical and psychological territoriality (consider self-image and sense of role as a territoriality construct)
   B. Why discomfort when the physical and psychological territoriality is disrupted?
2. Describe the "Disruptive Entry Spectrum" to participants. The "Disruptive Entry Spectrum" (see Figure 1) is a diagram which displays some of the main components of psychological rape trauma on the vertical and indicates emotional intensity indications on the horizontal line of the diagram. More components may be added to the vertical line of the diagram in later developments; just some major components are herein delineated.

Phase II

After Phase I has been completed, the process of

Figure 1

Disruptive Entry Spectrum

(Disruptive Entry into a Human's Perceived Territoriality)

EMOTIONS (Components of Rape Trauma)

(6) Anger Because of Helplessness

(5) Guilt without Fault

(4) Shame

(3) Feelings of Aloneness in Conflict

(2) An Absence of Controls

(1) Loss of Safety

Minimal Moderate Extreme

Intensity of Experience

systematic sensitization will occur. This process is the opposite of the psychological treatment process of systematic desensitization which systematically attempts to diminish anxiety in a participant by helping the person to relax and cope with a fearful object or idea. In systematic sensitization (original to this study) we hope to help the participant to realize previous past anxieties to intensify the person's anxiety concerning the components of rape and eventually rape in toto.

The process of systematic sensitization works as follows:

1. Participants are asked to view the Disruptive Entry Spectrum and look at the left vertical line. They are then asked "In reference to number 1, Loss of Safety, write down examples of how external environmental threat (other than rape) can create feelings of (a) minimal feelings of loss of safety, (b) moderate feelings of loss of safety, (c) extreme feelings of loss of safety." A discussion can follow whereby participants can compare answers.
2. Participants will then be asked to consider the same exercise writing down personal examples for (a) minimal feelings of loss of safety, (b) moderate feelings of loss of safety, and (c) extreme feelings of loss of safety. The Program Facilitator or Presenter will then ask for a discussion, stressing that no participant

is under any pressure to divulge any personal or painful experience. The Presenter may find it helpful to the process to offer personal experiences or some experiences of previous participants. It will become evident that personal perspective will differ on the intensity indicators: what may be minimal for one person may impact on another in an extreme manner. Some self-awareness questions will be devised in the manual to help the participants to scrutinize their own personal examples more adequately.

3. As indicated previously, educational materials/presentations would separate procedures #1 and #2 from the procedures to follow.

4. Phase II, procedures #1 and #2 will be repeated for (2) An Absence of Controls, (3) Feelings of Aloneness in Conflict, (4) Shame, (5) Guilt without Fault, (6) Anger Because of Helplessness. As previously stated, educational materials/presentations would separate each set of exercises.

NOTE: Participants should not in any of these areas be unduly pressured to come up with minimal, moderate, extreme examples of each emotional components, but they should be encouraged to try.

Phase III

Following the completion of Phase II, the

Participants and the Program Facilitator will have a culminating discussion. In this discussion, the Disruptive Entry Spectrum will be revisited and the Participants will be asked to review what they learned analyzing each individual component and will be asked to comment on the "nature of rape trauma in toto."

Concluding Remarks

This paper presents two original concepts which will be the heart of this proposed rape empathy training: the Disruptive Entry Spectrum and Systematic Sensitization. These ideas, I hope, will produce an effective vehicle to encourage identification and empathy.

The frustration of this author is motivated by the fact that this proposed training program can only be effective for those criminal justice workers who display a willingness to accept these ideas, but cannot have any direct impact on other reasons for insensitivities: systems related reasons, organizationally-based reasons, and other reasons such as blatant chronic machoism. But, possibly those we help to become more empathetic will have their impact on others.